

## **Chapter 3: Caring For Children in Foster Care**

### **When Children Enter Your Home**

- Placement Consideration
- Pre-placement Information/Visitation

### **How Placement Affects Children**

- Attachment
- Impact of Abuse and Neglect
- Impact of Family Interaction (Visits)
- Impact of Multiple Moves
- Culture and Children in Foster Care

### **Helping Children Adjust to Placement**

- The Process of Adjustment and Grieving
- Other Ways to Help with the Adjustment Process
- When Problem Behavior May Be Signs of Emotional Disturbance

### **Fostering Children Impacted by Sexual Abuse**

- Strategies for Fostering Sexually Abused Children

### **Managing Child Behaviors**

- Discipline Techniques

### **Daily Care Needs of Children in Foster Care**

- Education
- Health and Medical
  - Medical Assistance
  - Health Check
  - Immunization
  - Emergency Medical Care
- Specialized Skin and Hair Care
- Safety
- Life Skills Training
- Religious Training
- Recreation
- Life Books

### **Fostering Teens**

- Independent Living
- Teenage Drivers
- Jobs
- Teens and Sexuality
- LGBTQ

### **Transitions**

- Preparing Foster Children
- Children Returning Home
- Children Who Turn 18

### **Key Points**

## **Caring For Children in Foster Care**

Parenting children placed in the foster care system is a demanding and rewarding job all in the same. Children in foster care each come with unique strengths, abilities, challenges and needs. This chapter gives an overview of some of the circumstances you might encounter; tips on what to do and requirements of parenting children in foster care. It also emphasizes the importance of carefully considering the best match for you, your family and the children you will potentially provide care for.

### **WHEN A CHILD ENTERS YOUR HOME**

Children are placed in out-of-home care for a variety of reasons. Most enter foster care because they are not safe in their homes. Factors that impact safety can include abandonment; abuse; neglect; imprisonment, hospitalization, or death of caregivers; catastrophe, such as a fire that wipes out the family's home and resources; or because the child has special needs his or her parents are unable to meet.

Teens entering foster care under a delinquency or juvenile services order may be placed not only for their own protection, but to protect the community.

You and the children placed in your home should be aware of the reason for the child's placement. The reasons for placement and the situation's affect on the child may determine what kind of foster family is best able to meet the needs of the child. The child may have questions about why he or she is in a different home, and you must be prepared to provide sensitive and truthful answers to those questions.

Be sure you understand why the child is in foster care before he or she is placed in your home so that you can provide the best care possible for the child and your family.

### **Placement Considerations**

In choosing a foster home for the child, the case worker will consider the needs of the child and try to match the child's needs with the foster family that best meets those needs.

During a family's home study or assessment process, family members should give honest answers to questions about the children they feel comfortable caring for. That information could include: ages of children; kinds of emotional or physical problems; gender, race, or religion; specific disabilities or conditions; or other characteristics. You and other family members should be very honest with the case worker or foster care coordinator and not feel bad about acknowledging your lack of experience or concerns about caring for children with specific characteristics or needs. Having that information is the best way for case workers to make appropriate placements of children so they can receive the best care possible.

The case worker will provide you with as much information as possible about the child to allow you the opportunity to ask questions or say you don't want to accept placement of a child. Sometimes it isn't possible to have complete information about the child at the time of placement, but the case worker will discuss what information is available with you and when you can expect to receive more information.

The final decision to accept a foster child into the home lies with the foster family. In most cases, there is time for you and your family to gather more information, have family discussions, and thoughtfully consider whether you can meet the needs of the potential child being considered for placement. There are many reasons to decline a new placement, and it can be a difficult decision.

#### **Reasons to Decline a Placement**

- ❖ You do not feel you could meet the needs of the child being referred to you.
- ❖ Another child may mean changing bedrooms around and perhaps you are not comfortable with certain children sharing a bedroom.
- ❖ Another child in the home is having difficulties and you are not able to provide additional time needed to care for an additional child.
- ❖ Another child is not quite settled in and needs additional time and attention.
- ❖ You and your family are experiencing stressors in addition to parenting that would hinder your ability to provide good care.

**It is okay to say "no". You should not take a placement you do not feel comfortable with. Children in foster care need parents who are ready to care for their unique needs.**

You should not feel bad if you are not being called about potential placements, or if you learn another foster parent that you know was called about a potential child first. As stated earlier, there are many factors that play a role in choosing a foster home for a child. If you have questions about placement matches you need to talk with your foster care coordinator.

### **Pre-Placement Visits**

A pre-placement visit is one or several short visits, perhaps an hour, a day, or a weekend between the child and a new foster family. The visit is intended to help the child learn more about a new foster family and ease some of the concerns a child may have. Typically, the decision has been made to move the foster child to the new foster home and pre-placement visits help with the transition. Not every tribe or agency does pre-placement visits, so you should speak with your foster care coordinator or case worker to find out more about how your tribe or agency works.

It is important to include the birth parents in a pre-placement visit whenever possible. Including the birth parents in this visit reassures children that their parents know where they are living and are involved in the plans for their life. It also reassures birth parents about you and your family and communicates to them that they are expected to remain involved with the child. Involving birth parents in pre-placement visits also gives you a chance to learn more about the foster child by seeing the child and parents together, and it presents a first opportunity to establish a working relationship with the child's parents.

Sometimes extenuating circumstances prevent you and the birth family from meeting prior to placement. Even if this should happen, you must recognize that birth parents have important responsibilities to the child and play a critical role in the child's life. For the child's sake, you must strive to create a mutual working relationship with birth families as soon as possible after placement.

## **HOW PLACEMENT AFFECTS CHILDREN:**

Children often feel an incredible sense of loss and confusion when they are separated from their families. They have lost the most important people in their lives - their parents and sometimes their siblings. They have lost their familiar pattern of living. They have lost their homes, pets, and the places and things that make up their worlds, including their school, friends, and neighborhood.

Children in foster care may think of their family's behavior as normal. Even children who know their family is different often find their family's behavior reassuring simply because it is familiar.

Sometimes children think that it is **their** fault they are placed in foster care.

It is critical for you to understand that children will experience these emotions and more. If you have questions about a child's actions or emotions, you can contact the child's case worker, talk to other foster parents or call the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center.

### **Attachment:**

Attachment is the emotional connection that infants and children develop toward their parents and others who care for them. Attachment is often seen as an on going process. It is through attachment that children begin to develop a sense of who they are and what their place in the world will be.

Attachment develops over time as one's needs are met by significant others, ideally one's parents. The more consistently a child's needs are met over time by trusting others, the deeper the level of attachment. If needs are met inconsistently (such as in cases of abuse and neglect) attachment may be weakened. For foster children attachment may not only be disrupted by patterns of abuse and neglect but by the removal from their home and placement into a foster home. Impaired attachment has serious consequences on the individual's ability to sustain relationships, to become independent, and to develop conscience and self-discipline.

This topic area is much more involved than the limited information provided. Many agencies and organizations sponsor entire trainings regarding the issue of attachment and attachment disorders. For more information about attachment and attachment disorders contact the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center at [wifostercareandadoption.org](http://wifostercareandadoption.org) or 1-800-947-8074

### **Impact of Abuse and Neglect:**

Abuse, neglect, and separation all can have profound effects on children coming into care. The degree of the effect varies greatly between children. Below are some factors that may influence how well the child copes with abuse or neglect.

#### **Factors that Influence How a Child Copes:**

- The age of the child. In general, young children are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect and are less able to protect themselves.
- The length of the abuse or neglect. Severe, frequent abuse or neglect over long periods of time can generally be more damaging.
- The child's relationship with the abuser. The closer the relationship the child has with the abuser, the more severe the impact of the abuse or neglect can be on the child.
- Children who have relationships with other important adults or individuals tend to be less affected by abuse and neglect.
- Some children are better able to cope with and withstand abuse and neglect, while others are more emotionally vulnerable.

### **Impact of Family Interaction:**

Interactions, or visits, between the child and his or her family, including any siblings, are the best way to maintain critical connections for children and are required by state policy. These interactions can take place in many ways – through school events, doctor appointments, visits at the agency or foster home, or in other everyday ways.

Children may experience many different feelings and emotions before, during, and after they interact with their parents and other family members. These emotions can often impact the child's behavior. Coping with these behaviors may be challenging for you.

### **Challenges Related to Family Interaction:**

#### **Children who are upset after family interaction:**

If children are upset after family interaction, you should allow them to have and express their feelings. Even if it is occasionally upsetting, in general there are more advantages than disadvantages to such interactions. Family interaction helps the child maintain a sense of reality about his/her family. Having a schedule to help the child know when the next contact with family will be is also helpful.

#### **Family Interaction feels like a mistake:**

You should not conclude that it is a mistake for children to visit with their families. However, if you have serious concerns about the safety of the child during family interactions, that information should be reported to the child's case worker.

#### **A need to talk:**

If children are allowed to talk freely about their families and their situation they often feel less anxious. You should answer the child's questions in an age-appropriate way. Responses should be clear, simple, and sensitive.

#### **Family is still family:**

Children often continue to love their parents no matter how they are treated or what problems their parents have. You need to be careful about what they say about a child's birth family and how they say it. If you are negative about birth parents, children may respond defensively, and this could have a negative impact on their development, their sense of security, and their relationship with you. It could also put a child in a difficult position to feel like they need to pick one family over another.

### **Impact of Multiple Moves:**

Children need stable and nurturing environments in which they can grow and develop. When a child experiences multiple placements, their relationships with people they care about are disrupted, often permanently. If their connections to people are frequently interrupted, it can impact the child's ability and willingness to form attachments and develop trust. Children who have experienced multiple moves often demonstrate behavioral issues which can lead to additional moves because they get used to or expect to be moved from home to home or person to person. Indeed, some children respond to frequent moves by behaving in ways that prevent closeness or intimacy. This defense prevents additional losses, but at a huge developmental and personal cost.

When you are considering the placement in your home of a child who has had multiple placements, you need to carefully consider the child's need for extra time, attention, patience, and commitment. Foster parents need to find out information about things that worked well in previous placements to build upon positive interactions with the child. Knowing about things that didn't go well in other homes can also give the foster parent information about what has been tried and didn't work.



### **Culture and Children in Foster Care:**

Culture is the values, rituals, and belief systems of an individual, family, community, or other group.

Your ability to understand and support people of different cultures can have a tremendous influence on how well children adjust to life in foster care. When a child is placed in foster care the culture of their family or community of origin is often quite different from—or in conflict with—the culture of your family. When this happens the child often feels caught in the middle: on the one hand they must try to figure out how to fit into the culture of your family, and on the other they want to remain true to the culture of their birth family.

#### **Tips to help Reduce Cultural Conflict for Children**

- ❖ Ask children and their parents' about rules, rituals, and routines and find ways to meet those needs (Example: preparing foods familiar to the child).
- ❖ Help children celebrate and appreciate their ethnic origin by finding information about their heritage, attending ethnic events and connecting with groups that may be able to help give more information about that particular ethnic group.
- ❖ Consider the origins of the routines, rituals, and values in your home.
- ❖ Consider which things in your home can be modified to meet the needs of the child and make them feel more comfortable.
- ❖ Find out what you need to learn in order to work with children from varied backgrounds; seek out that information and learn it.
- ❖ Challenge and work with community members around racism and ethnic stereotyping.

**Key Points to Remember About the Placement of Children in Foster Care:**

- ❖ **It is important to understand why a child is in foster care before he or she is placed in your home in order to provide the best care possible for the child and your family.**
- ❖ **A case worker will consider the needs of the child and try to match the child's needs with the foster family that best meets those needs.**
- ❖ **For the child's sake, you must strive to create a mutual working relationship with birth families as soon as possible after placement.**
- ❖ **Children often feel an incredible sense of loss and confusion when they are separated from their families, regardless of the reason for placement**
- ❖ **Impaired attachment has serious consequences on the individual's ability to sustain relationships, to become independent, and to develop conscience and self-discipline.**
- ❖ **Abuse, neglect, and separation can all have profound effects on children coming into care.**
- ❖ **Interactions, or visits, between the child and his or her family, including any siblings, are the best way to maintain critical connections for children and are required by state policy.**
- ❖ **When you are considering the placement in your home of a child who has had multiple placements, you need to carefully consider the child's need for extra time, attention, patience, and commitment.**
- ❖ **When a child is placed in foster care the culture of their family or community of origin is often quite different from—or in conflict with—the culture of your family.**

## **HELPING CHILDREN ADJUST TO PLACEMENT**

It is often difficult for children to adjust to a new home with new people and new rules. This section includes information about how you can make the child's adjustment to your home a little easier.

If there has not been a pre-placement visit, you will need to show the child around, including where the child will put his or her belongings and sleep. You need to share your household routine and let the child know the family rules. Children need to know what the rules are in order to be able to follow them. Keeping in mind the child's age and developmental abilities will also help you ensure your expectations for the child are realistic.

Another thing you may do when a child arrives in your home is to talk to the child, discussing his or her likes and dislikes, and planning how to make introductions to new people. You should let the child know that the reasons for his or her placement are private and that no one else needs to know unless the child wants to tell them. You often can help the child come up with truthful and appropriate ways to answer the most common questions asked of children in foster care. For example, the child could tell others "I am staying with this family for a while."

You should not throw away toys or clothes that child has brought along, even if they are in very poor condition unless the items are unsafe or contaminated. These items are familiar and may help the child feel more comfortable. It is also important to birth families to see their child with toys and clothes they have sent. Sometimes it is better not to wash the children's items right away, as they are used to the scents of their family and home. Think about what it is like to stay at a friend's house or a hotel for the night nothing looks, sounds, or smells the same! If you must get rid of a child's things, you should tell the child beforehand and try to help him or her understand why the things have to be destroyed or thrown away.

The first few weeks of placement will be a period of adjustment for everyone. The most important thing you can offer during this time is a stable and consistent family life. Because children come to foster care with a variety of backgrounds and experiences, every child's adjustment will be different. You can help the child through this time by being patient, flexible, and understanding.

Some foster parents have routines that they do with every child who comes to live with them. An example of this is a foster parent who takes every child to the grocery store – just the two of them – on the child's first day in the home to buy food that the child likes and to have some time with the child. It may be helpful to talk with other experienced foster parents to find out if there are unique ways they have learned to help children become a little more comfortable.

### **The Process of Adjustment and Grieving**

Children entering foster care typically react to separation from their families and express their feelings through behavior.

Children react to being placed in foster care in a variety of ways. Some create problems or act out. Others withdraw. Still others react by being model children. Although these outward behaviors are very different, inside children feel many of the same things: confused about why they have been separated from their family, sad because of the way their life used to be, angry, fearful, and powerless.

Many children eventually respond to patience and consistent parenting and adjust well to their placement. Each child works through the process of grieving the separation from their birth family at his or her own pace. This process may take days, weeks, or years.

The following is a listing of the stages or phases of grief that children in foster care often go through, ways children may act in these stages, and some tips for helping children work through their feelings.

### **Stages of Grieve and Loss**

**It is important to note that children in foster care often move from one stage and then back again or even appear to display two stages at one time. There may be a spiraling effect, and the child's situation, duration in care and own emotional development will affect how they handle their grief. The stages are not simply a 'checklist' that children go through and are necessarily done with.**

#### **Stage 1: Shock and Denial**

When a child is first placed, he or she may be very eager to please, cooperative, and generally enjoyable to be around. Experienced foster families recognize these behaviors as the "honeymoon" stage. Other children in the shock and denial stage may have difficulty eating or sleeping or may revert to the behaviors of a much younger child.

#### **Tips for working through the Shock and Denial Stage:**

- ❖ Receive the child calmly. Settle down to a regular routine as quickly as possible.
- ❖ Explain and discuss the reasons for placement at a level the child can understand and in a soothing and reassuring tone. Repeat this information as often as needed.
- ❖ Give factual information about the placement and the location of the child's parents and siblings.
- ❖ Respect the child's feelings about what has occurred. Let the child know that you are available if he or she wants to talk.
- ❖ Respect the child's birth family and child's loyalty to them.
- ❖ Help and support interaction with the birth family to the greatest extent possible.
- ❖ Let the child have his or her favorite things and provide a place to keep them.
- ❖ Focus on good behavior.
- ❖ Avoid threats. Warnings of, "I'll tell your worker," or, "I will give my 30-day notice," leave painful impressions. The child has already lost one or more homes and may feel threatened by losing another. In the long run, this undermines the child's sense of security and can be hurtful.

## **Stage 2: Bargaining**

Children in this stage will do everything they can think of to go back home. Many children believe that if they are good, then they can go home. They may decide to be “bad” so the foster family will not want them and they will be sent home. For example, a child may ask if he or she can go home if he or she does well in school and gets good grades.

### **Tips for working through the Bargaining Stage:**

- ❖ Explain and discuss the reasons for placement again, but do not argue with a child who does not accept the reasons. Allow the child time and space to process what is occurring.
- ❖ Continue to help and support interaction with the birth family.
- ❖ Communicate the child’s beliefs to his or her parents and other people involved with the case; when possible, develop a collaborative plan for helping the child work through this process.
- ❖ Continue to reinforce and practice tips given in the Shock and Denial Stage.

### **Stage 3: Anger**

When bargaining does not appear to work, anger often sets in. Most children have difficulty expressing their feelings, so they act them out. Some may come to a foster home in the anger stage. They may refuse to follow house rules, break things, attempt to run away, or try to hurt themselves. The anger stage is typically the most difficult for foster families because it is hard to cope with the behavior, understand what the child is feeling, and find ways to support the child through this process.

#### **Tips for working through the Anger Stage:**

- ❖ Tell the child that it's OK and normal to be angry.
- ❖ Teach the child acceptable ways to express anger.
- ❖ Remind the child of the rules and be consistent with consequences if the rules are broken.
- ❖ Find a safe place for the child to be angry.
- ❖ Help the child understand that he or she is not to blame for their placement in foster care.
- ❖ If the child tells exaggerated stories, don't argue.
- ❖ Think of the challenging behaviors as messages of unmet needs: "I'm lonely," "I'm bored," "I have no power," "I don't feel safe," "You don't value me," or "I don't know how to tell you what I need."
- ❖ Work with the child's therapist, case worker, as appropriate tribe, birth parents, and other professionals working with the child to determine the best intervention strategies to help the child adjust to placement.
- ❖ Give the child time and space.
- ❖ Find supportive resources for both the child and your family.

### **Stage 4: Despair**

Eventually reality sets in. The child may have a variety of reactions as he or she starts to understand and accept what is happening. The foster parent should pay attention to changing behaviors of the child, including: loss of appetite or sleep, not wanting to be around the foster family or any other people, dangerous or risky behaviors, or other new or unusual actions.

#### **Tips for working through the Despair Stage:**

- ❖ Encourage the child to talk about his or her feelings but also respect the child's choice to not talk or to talk about things at his or her own pace.
- ❖ Use dolls and pictures to help younger children act out feelings through play.
- ❖ Help older children express hurt and worry in their own ways.
- ❖ Get the child interested in creating a life book (*life books are discussed in detail later in this chapter*).
- ❖ Show respect for the child's feelings and provide reassurance through supportive gestures – for example, hugs or extra time and attention.
- ❖ Work with the child's case worker, therapist, birth parents, and other professionals to develop the best plan for support. Regularly update everyone about the child's behaviors



### **Stage 5: Acceptance or Managing Loss**

At this stage, children may begin to develop new friendships and to accept the foster parents' role in their life. They may be able to move into new situations more easily and may experience less frustration.

#### **Tips for working through the Acceptance Stage:**

- ❖ Provide the child with opportunities to develop new relationships.
- ❖ Continue to assist with reunification efforts or, if reunification is not the plan, support the permanence goal for the child.
- ❖ Allow the child to continue to remember and talk about his or her birth family.
- ❖ Continue to work on the life book with the child.

#### **REMINDER:**

- ❖ Foster children often move from one stage and then back again or even appear to display two stages at one time.
- ❖ A foster child's reaction to his or her experience in foster care will vary from child to child.
- ❖ Changes in permanency plans or life events may impact a child's grieving process.

### **Other Ways to Help with the Adjustment Process:**

#### **Understand Normal Behavioral Development:**

Even experienced parents may forget the normal developmental stages and patterns of behavior of children. Children in foster care may have behavioral or developmental challenges unlike other children their age. It can be helpful to recognize that many challenging behaviors are “normal” and that not all difficult behaviors are related to placement. Also, keep in mind that many foster children may function at a level more typical of a younger or older child. For example, a 7-year-old may have the social skills of a 3-year-old. Foster parents will have to work with the child on a 3-year-old level until the child’s social skills increase.

#### **Understand the Child’s History:**

Refer to the Information to Foster Parents Form provided by the case worker, and ask questions about the information provided. Understanding the child’s experience with his or her birth parents and possibly other foster families may provide clues about the child’s behaviors.

#### **Provide a Supportive Home Environment**

A safe, nurturing, and predictable home can help a child work through feelings of fear, anxiety, loss, grief, and other emotions. Being predictable and consistent can also help a child who may have difficulty transitioning from one thing or one place to the next or understanding the cause and effect of his or her behaviors.

#### **Understand Your Reactions to Problem Behavior:**

Try to not take a child’s misbehavior personally. There are many reasons children behave the way they do. It may be that in the past acting out was the only way to get the attention of a parent or caregiver. It may be that the child knows certain behaviors get a response from you. When you do not take a child’s behaviors personally and remain calm you will be able to think more objectively about how to respond.

### **Identify What Triggers the Problem Behavior:**

When a child displays problematic behavior, think about what happened before the behavior took place. Look for the “trigger” of the behavior. Look for a pattern. Sometimes the child’s behavior is an immediate response to the trigger. Other times the trigger may have occurred the day or week before the behavior. It can be hard to discover what events trigger a child’s behavior. Working closely with the child’s case manager, therapist, parents, and other professionals may help you discover or understand what triggers a child’s behaviors. Sharing what you learn about the child’s triggers and reactions with the child’s parents can help create consistent, safe environments for the child.

### **Bring Trigger Events to the Child’s Attention:**

Not every trigger is observable. After they have calmed down, it is good to ask children about what they think led up to the behavior. Questions such as, “What happened right before you threw the toy? How did that make you feel?” may allow the child to connect feelings to behavior and give you information.

You need to address the situation with the child when the child is calm so that you and the child can work together to find a solution. For example, you might say: “I’ve noticed that when I say that it’s your bedtime, you usually seem to have a hard time getting your pajamas on. Is there anything we can do together to help you when its time for bed?”

By bringing these observations to children’s attention, you will help the child understand the cause and effect of their behavior and give them ideas about how to react differently.

### **Try Not to Label a Child’s Behavior:**

It is easy to slip into a habit of using labels. For example, a foster parent may observe a child acting “depressed” and communicate that to the therapist or case worker. “Depressed” has different meanings to different people. Giving descriptions based on the behaviors observed is much more helpful to everyone. For example: “John stays in his room for most of the day and doesn’t eat very much. He doesn’t laugh or smile at all and doesn’t want to play with other kids” is more helpful than saying “John is depressed.”

### **Document Behaviors to Help You Understand and Respond:**

Writing down your observations can help identify what triggers the problem. Be specific, write down what led up to the child's behavior, what specific behaviors or actions the child engaged in, and how you addressed the situation.

A record of the behaviors also helps measure the child's progress. It allows the child's case worker, therapist, birth parents, and the child to see how positive change has occurred over time, no matter how small the change may be.

#### **An example chart:**

Date	Time	What happened	What happened before incident	What happened after	Duration of incident or intensity	Who was present

### **When Problem Behaviors May Be Signs of Emotional Disturbance**

Sometimes it is difficult to separate behaviors and concerns associated with foster care placement from those associated with a more serious emotional disturbance or mental health concern. Signs of emotional disturbance typically are behaviors and reactions that last too long, are exaggerated, or are consistently inappropriate for the situation or the child's stage of development.

#### **Examples:**

- ❖ It may be expected that a child would get mad when someone calls him or her a name, but plotting to seriously hurt the person simply due to an insult is concerning.
- ❖ Two-year-olds typically throw themselves on the floor during a temper tantrum, teenagers typically do not.
- ❖ It is normal to panic and flee from a fire, but not from a working elevator.
- ❖ Crying in reaction to separation and loss can be expected, crying that goes on every day in school for six months is concerning.
- ❖ It is not unusual for someone to talk to him or herself on occasion, but it is concerning when someone reports hearing voices or takes action based on what the voices are saying.

**FOSTER PARENTS SHOULD NEVER BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS OR SEEK HELP IF A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR IS UNUSUAL OR SOMETHING THEY HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.**

**Key Points to Remember about a Child's Adjustment to Placement:**

- ❖ Foster parents can help the child with adjustment to foster care placement by being patient, flexible, and understanding.
- ❖ Children entering foster care typically react to separation from their families by expressing their feelings through behavior.
- ❖ Children in foster care often move through the process of grieving by going from one stage and then back again or even appear to display two stages at one time.
- ❖ A foster child's reaction to his or her experience in foster care will vary from child to child.
- ❖ Changes in permanency plans or life events may impact a child's grieving process and adjustment to placement.
- ❖ It is important to have an understanding of typical child development.
- ❖ It is important to understand as much as possible about the child's history prior to placement in your home.
- ❖ Being predictable and consistent can help a child who is having difficulty adjusting to placement.
- ❖ Consider the child's triggers to problem behavior as well as your own triggers to reacting to the child.
- ❖ By bringing observations of behavior to children's attention, you help children begin to understand the cause and effect of their behavior and give them ideas about how to react differently.
- ❖ Signs of emotional disturbance typically are behaviors and reactions that last too long, are exaggerated, or are consistently inappropriate for the situation or the child's stage of development.

## **FOSTERING CHILDREN IMPACTED BY SEXUAL ABUSE**

Many children do not disclose sexual abuse even when asked about it directly. It is not unusual for caregivers to discover, after they have had a child in placement for a while, that the child was sexually abused. This can be very difficult on foster parents for a variety of reasons. Below are some strategies or ideas for foster children who have been sexually abused.

### **Strategies for Fostering Sexually Abused Children**

You must be able to discuss sex and sexual abuse. Children need to know that they can talk about what happened to them without upsetting you.

You need to be patient; children need time to develop trust, to feel comfortable disclosing the circumstances of prior sexual abuse, and to learn ways of working through their experiences.

You need to remember that **ANY** child entering their home may have experienced sexual abuse. You need to be prepared to recognize and deal with the issues related to sexual abuse.

You need to remember that flexibility is essential - different children need different things at different phases in their recovery.

You may need to alter your own behaviors and develop or modify house rules to provide a safe and comfortable home environment for the child.

You must be willing and able to provide **HIGH LEVELS OF SUPERVISION**. Some children who have been sexually abused develop overly sexualized behaviors. These behaviors can be directed at other children, foster parents, pets, or themselves. You should work with the child's case worker, therapist, and other professionals to develop a safety plan.

You must be open to seeking assistance from external sources such as therapists and other professionals working with the child.

You must also be willing to work with the birth family in a respectful and empathetic way. This may be particularly challenging when you think the birth parents may have contributed to the sexual abuse of the child.

You need to understand your feelings about the situation in order to be able to effectively help the child. It may be helpful for you to discuss your with other foster parents. Any conversations should focus on your feelings or reactions and respect the confidentiality of the child and his or her family.

## MANAGING CHILD BEHAVIORS

Appropriate discipline focuses on helping children understand what they did wrong and teaches them new ways to work through their emotions or problems. Discipline in foster homes cannot involve physical punishment and should be approached as a method of ***teaching*** rather than a method of ***punishment***.

**Wisconsin Administrative Code HFS 56.09 (5) includes information about discipline by a foster parent. More specifically, HFS 56.09(5) prohibits the following forms of discipline:**

- ❖ Physical punishment of any type
- ❖ Verbal abuse, profanity, derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family or threats to expel the child from the home
- ❖ Allowing another child or adult other than the licensed foster parents to discipline a foster child
- ❖ Deprivation of meal, mail, or family interaction
- ❖ Punishment or ridicule for bedwetting or other lapses in toilet training
- ❖ Mechanical restraint or locking a foster child in **ANY** enclosed area
- ❖ Restricting foster children to unlocked spaces beyond what is specifically outlined in HFS 56 for the purposes of time out---***See Below***

It is important to keep in mind that many children in foster care have been neglected and abused. Due to their past experiences these children may respond very differently than other children to being disciplined. As previously discussed, children may be reacting to placement or stages of grief. They may have experienced little to no discipline, severe punishment, or inconsistent discipline.



## **Discipline Techniques**

The needs of children in foster care are varied and complex, and there is no one “**magic**” way of managing their behavior. Things that work with one child may not work for another child. Experienced foster parents have said that it is important to constantly seek out additional information and training to meet the changing needs of the children in their homes. Below are some techniques and ideas from experienced foster parents regarding discipline.

### **Discussion**

Communicate needs and expectations to children. Anticipate a potential problem and discuss what the consequences will be. Clearly state, “If this happens, we will do this....” Or, “When you are not ready in the morning, we are all late....” Hold family meetings and allow for open communication.

### **Modeling**

Demonstrate and model the behavior that you want the child to learn and strengthen. Have other children in the home help model behavior; actions speak louder than words.

### **Reinforce Good Behavior**

Try to point out something the child does well every day. (With some of the most difficult children, looking for positives helps the foster parent as much as the child.) Encourage efforts as well as accomplishments. Let the child know when he or she has controlled his or her behavior well. Chart progress and reinforce, reinforce, reinforce. Rewards can take the form of small treats, smiles, extra attention, or special privileges.

### **Natural Consequences**

Unless it is too dangerous or costly, let the child learn the consequences of his or her actions. If a child breaks one of his or her toys, then he or she will not have it later.

### **Logical Consequences**

Logical consequences are tied directly to the misbehavior or action. If a foster child writes on a wall, the consequence is that he or she cleans that wall.

## **Planned Ignoring**

Sometimes the best response is no response. This should only be used when the behaviors do not pose a safety threat. Some children only get attention when they acted up, so try to reinforce positive behavior.

## **Have House Rules**

You should explain your house and family rules to all new children. If a rule is not easily understood or explained, you may want to ask yourself if that rule is really necessary. Remember that it takes time for children to adjust to a new home and fully understand and remember the rules.

## **Loss of privileges**

Effective discipline may include taking away privileges such as television time, computer, video games, and time with friends. When using this form of discipline, it is important to explain why the privilege was taken away and how the foster child can react differently or make a better choice next time.

However, the loss of a privilege should also be appropriate to the child's level of understanding and needs. If a child has problems making friends and breaks a rule before he or she is about to go to a movie with a friend, the you might say that the child and his or her friend need to come over to the home instead of taking away the child's time with his or her friend completely.

## Time Out

The main goal of a time out is to help a child gain self control. It is important to plan ahead with a child where time outs will occur. It should be in a quiet place where the child will not get the attention of others. Time outs are most effective with younger children, especially when the child can be moved away from the item, situation, or person that he or she is reacting to.

**Wisconsin Administrative Code HFS 56 gives clear direction about how time outs, or room restrictions, are to be used for foster children.**

- ❖ Children under 6 years of age may not be placed in a time out for longer than **10** minutes at a time.
- ❖ Children 6 to 10 years of age may not be placed in a time out for longer than **30** minutes at a time.
- ❖ Children over 10 years may not be placed in a time out for longer than **60** minutes at a time.

During this time, the room or area the child is in must remain unlocked, and the child must be allowed to use the toilet if necessary. The child must also be within hearing of a responsible caretaker.

## **DAILY CARE NEEDS OF FOSTER CHILDREN**

### **Education:**

As a foster parent you have a very important role in the foster child's education. You are expected to enroll children in school, make sure the child attends school, and help the child keep up with his or her school work and activities. Sometimes the child's case worker will help with this process as well. It is the case worker's responsibility to receive the appropriate signatures and consents from the birth parents regarding the child's education such as transfer of school records and permission slips.

Sometimes children have behavioral and academic needs. Support for children with educational needs may require more involvement by you, and you are expected to work with school personnel to help the child. Children with education needs often have special plans to address those needs called an IEP, Individualized Educational Plan.

### **Heath and Medical:**

#### **Medical Assistance**

Each child in foster care has medical coverage - either through Wisconsin's Medical Assistance program (MA) or their parent's health insurance. The child's birth parent or guardian must sign a form authorizing any medical care for the child. This form should be provided to the foster parent. If the foster parent does not receive the child's authorization form or if the birth parent or guardian fails to authorize medical care for the child, it is the agency's responsibility to assure that the child gets all required health services.

If the child is covered under the parent's policy, the insurance provider may need to be contacted prior to appointments to verify coverage. If the child is covered by MA, the foster parent will receive a MA card for the child. Foster parents must present the card each time the child has an appointment for services covered by Medical Assistance.

#### **Health Check**

According to foster home licensing standards, you are also responsible for making sure that the health needs of the foster children in your home are met. According to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program (EPSDT) requirements - also known in Wisconsin as HealthCheck - a child covered by MA must have a specific number of physical and dental screens every year, depending upon the child's age. Foster parents are required to arrange a Health Check screen within 30 days of placement. The medical appointment should be within the requirements of the HealthCheck standards. If a child had a medical appointment within the past couple of months, he or she would not need another appointment until one year from the previous appointment, unless the child had a medical condition needing attention. You should

arrange for the child's medical appointment within 30 days of the child being placed in their home, but the actual screen may take place beyond 30 days.

When a child has a medical or dental appointment, you need to give the health care provider the appropriate forms (see appendix). You also need to give the provider a copy of the Authorization to Consent to Medical Treatment form and Informed Consent of Release of Information form, which has been signed by the parent or legal guardian. Upon completion of the Health Check screening, a copy of the completed form must be returned to you. You shall then give a copy to the appropriate case worker and retain a copy for your records.

### **Immunization**

To help protect children from various diseases, Wisconsin has an immunization law which requires children in day care centers and students through grade 12 to be immunized against certain diseases. Waivers are available for reasons of religion, medical history, or personal conviction. Talk with the child's social worker and find out what immunizations the child may need, if any, and get the child vaccinated as soon as possible.

### **Emergency Medical Care**

When a child is placed in foster care, the case worker requests that the birth parents sign an Authorization to Consent to Medical Treatment. If signed, this allows foster parents to authorize emergency medical care only when the birth parent(s) are unable to be contacted. If a birth parent is able, he or she should authorize medical care. In situations where the birth parent(s) refuse to sign the Authorization to Consent form, the court can appoint a guardian who can authorize the necessary medical care for the child.

For more information about requirements of foster parents regarding the health care of foster children in their home, refer to section 56.09(4) in foster home licensing standards.

### **Specialized Hair and Skin Care:**

For children of all ethnicities, it is essential to a child's sense of identity and self-esteem that they are given the opportunity to look like they are well cared for and groomed. How children look can shape the conclusions outsiders draw. Children notice others' assessments and often interpret them as evidence of their own inadequacy. When you foster African American or Biracial children who are of a differing ethnicity, the hair and skin care practices necessary to maintain health and beauty may be totally different from your own. Developing the fundamental knowledge and skills to care for the hair and skin of African American or Biracial children is essential to providing for a child's overall well-being.

The preferred way to gain this knowledge is by talking with the child's family (when possible). The child's family can give their suggestions or thoughts regarding how they would prefer the child's skin and hair be cared for. It might also be helpful to contact a beautician that specializes in African American or Biracial hair for advice and recommendations. Lastly, the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center has several books and other resources to aid you in finding more information about caring for the skin and hair of African American or Biracial children.

## **Safety**

It is required that you child-proof your home according to the requirements in licensing standards to protect the safety of all children living there and that you educate children in foster care about safety in your home. While your own children have grown up with your rules to help keep them safe, a foster child will not know these rules.

### **Safety Issues to Pay Special Attention to:**

#### **Firearms**

Make sure firearms are always unloaded and kept in a locked cabinet, inaccessible to curious children. Ammunition should be locked and stored separately from the firearms.

#### **Cleaning supplies and medications**

Keep all medications, poisons, matches, cigarette lighters, household cleaning supplies, nail polish remover, pesticides, and painting supplies in places where children cannot access them.

#### **Fire Safety**

Go over the evacuation routes in your home with your foster child within the first several days of placement. Review these routes with the whole family every three months so that everyone knows how to get out of each room. Check smoke detectors every month, and keep them in working order.

#### **Child Safety and Automobile Requirements**

Children up to age four must be restricted in a crash-tested, child-safe car seat when they are riding in an automobile. From age four and until eight children must, by law, be buckled into booster seat. After age eight or if the child weighs more than 80 pounds they must, by law must wear a seat belt at all times. You should never buy a used child safety seat or booster seat. Child safety seats expire or are recalled at times and buying a used car seat may create a safety concern. Some agencies provide infant seats to foster parents or may know of a service group, hospital or public health nursing service which can provide a seat. Check with the agency when the child is placed for assistance in locating the necessary child safety seat.

#### **Other Safety Considerations**

Always provide good supervision around swimming pools, rivers, lakes, or other water activities. Check with the agency for policies regarding safety and supervision for other more "hazardous" recreational activities, such as trampolines, horseback riding, recreational vehicles, boating, and waterskiing or tubing.

**For more information about safety requirements in foster homes, refer to section 56.08 in foster home licensing standards.**

### **Life Skills Training**

You are encouraged to teach life skills that are appropriate to the developmental level of children at all ages. With this guidance and support, when the time comes for children to move into adulthood, they are better prepared to live independently.

Life skills may include personal skills such as exploring one's values, making good decisions, working through problems, setting goals, communicating with others, managing time, dealing with anger, and developing self-esteem. Other more measurable skills might include: cooking, shopping, doing laundry, cleaning, and managing money.

Many daily tasks and things we take for granted or do automatically may be tasks or skills that a child needs to learn. You should work with the children in your home to help figure out what skills the child already knows and what skills you can work on together.

### **Religious Training**

As foster parents, you may want to provide religious experiences that are appropriate to for the child's age and religious heritage. Birth parents maintain the right to determine what type of religious or spiritual activities they prefer for their child. The child also has the ability to determine what religious activities he or she chooses to participate in. If there is no religious tradition in the child's background, foster parents may want to include the child in their family's religious activities and organizations. However, the child's wishes, and those of his or her parents, must be respected.

If you have questions about what religious activities you can have a foster child participate in or if there is a difference between what the child wants and what the child's parents want, you should contact the child's case manager.

**For more information about requirements regarding religious activities for a foster child, refer to section 56.09(1) (g) in foster home licensing standards.**



### **Recreation:**

Children should be encouraged to participate in activities – sports, hobbies, clubs, and other activities – of their choice. Participating in activities outside of the home allows the child to make friends and have new experiences. You should talk with the children in your home about what they like to do and activities that members of the family like to do. Families should include all children in those activities or hobbies that they do together.

**For requirements about allowing foster children to participate in community activities, refer to section 56.09(1) (f) in foster home licensing standards.**

### **Life books:**

A **life book** is an account of a child's life in words, pictures or other significant items (certificates, awards) - similar to a scrap book. The purpose of a life book is to connect a child's previous experiences to the child's life at the present. Working with children to record their past in a life book gives them a sense of who they are, where they came from, and what they have been through. A life book can give a child in foster care a sense of identity. It is also important to not forget the present. When significant events take place, help or ask children if they want to record them in their life book. These events may be important to them later in life.

#### **Examples of what life books may include are:**

- ❖ Snapshots of the child, relatives, friends or pets
- ❖ Pictures of places that were/are meaningful
- ❖ Growth charts
- ❖ School records/achievements
- ❖ Descriptions of likes/dislikes
- ❖ Origin of the child's name
- ❖ Special stories from child's past/current history
- ❖ Family tree
- ❖ Explanations/descriptions of previous placement

## FOSTERING TEENS

The most important developmental task of adolescence is the struggle for and development of independence. Just like other teens, teens placed in foster care have a need to work toward this developmental task. However, they may need a much more structured and consistent environment to achieve this independence.

### **Factors that impact a foster teen's development and ability to achieve independence are:**

- ❖ Impact of abuse/neglect on the formation of self image, values, and trust in others.
- ❖ Delayed knowledge and skills due to family chaos, abuse and neglect, and placement disruption.
- ❖ Lack of understanding of personal and family history due to limited or inaccurate information.
- ❖ Lack of consistent peer group due to placement or multiple moves.
- ❖ Lack of feelings of security and self worth due to lack of permanent connections/permanency.
- ❖ Inability to identify or express emotions appropriately due to personal and family history.
- ❖ Negative self concept due to rejection by birth family, separation and loss, too much responsibility at a young age, placement disruption, being different from peers, and abuse and neglect.

Given these factors it is important that all parties involved in a teen's life (foster parent, birth family, case worker, as appropriate tribal staff, school, therapists, etc.) work together to develop a plan that is specific to that teen's needs and can help the teen prepare for successful transition to adulthood.

### **Independent Living Skills**

You have a critical role of identifying and providing activities that will help teens successfully transition into adulthood. Because you are a consistent presence in a teen's life, you are available on a daily basis to model behavior and provide the guidance, coaching, and feedback teens need as they become independent.

As previously touched on earlier in the chapter (life skills) independent living preparation does not begin or end at a specific age. It is a process that begins when children are very young and intensifies over time. Many children in foster care may have missed some of the opportunities for learning independent living skills over time because of family crises. When children aren't actively helped to learn the skills they need for a successful transition to adulthood, they are more likely to experience unemployment, homelessness, imprisonment, or victimization. Some children in foster care may need extra help to learn what it means to be independent and what skills they need to be successful on their own.

#### **Here are some things foster parents can do to help teens learn independent living skills and achieve their goals:**

- ❖ Work with your teen to plan a sample budget
- ❖ Help your teen learn sources of help in the community, such as the local job center, food pantry, or health clinic.
- ❖ Take your teen to view apartments for rent in the area. Teach him or her about security issues and how to communicate with a landlord.
- ❖ Have the teen help you with making meals or ask the teen to plan a meal for the family.
- ❖ Help your teen understand the difference between wanting something (i.e. a new outfit) and needing something (i.e. to pay the electric bill).
- ❖ Show your teen how to complete a job application.
- ❖ In general, look for or create teachable moments for your teen that will help him or her learn about being responsible and independent.

### **Teenage Drivers:**

Getting a driver's license is a major milestone in the life of a teen. The decision for a teen in foster care to pursue his or her driver's license should be discussed with the teen, the teen's parents, case worker, foster parent, and any other professionals who may have important information about the child's ability to meet the requirements of having a driver's license. However, the ultimate decision to give consent for a teen to drive will come from the birth parent or legal guardian. Additionally, details regarding use of vehicles, car insurance, having other riders in the car, and other important aspects of driving will need to be discussed.

**Specific questions regarding the teenage drivers and the law as well as the application process can be answer through the Department of Transportation. Specific information about driving requirements established by the Department of Transportation can be accessed at the following web site:**

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/index.htm>

### **Jobs:**

Many teens in foster care have part-time jobs; some even have full-time jobs. The earnings of a child in care will not affect the monthly rate paid to a foster parent for meeting the needs of the child. The only exception that exists is when a child is receiving Social Security Income (SSI). If a foster child earns over \$200, half of the amount over \$200 goes back to SSI.

For a teen in foster care to be able to work, he or she must receive a work permit, which requires a signature from the child's birth parents. The case worker should obtain signatures for the work permit.

### **Teens and Sexuality:**

One of the most challenging parts of parenting teens is helping and supporting them as they struggle with questions and challenges regarding sex. Teens in foster care bring additional issues to the table based on their personal and family histories (e.g., prior sexual abuse).

State foster parent licensing does give some direction in regards to the area of children in out of home care and sexual practices. HFS 56.09(1) (d) indicates that a foster parent cannot deny a foster child access to confidential family planning services. While this requirement does not compel you to actively teach children about birth control, it does require you to give teens placed in your home access to these services.

You will want to discuss concerns about dating and sexual behavior you have regarding a teen placed in your home with the teen's worker and birth family. It might be helpful for everyone involved to sensitively talk with the teen and help him or her to make an educated decision to engage or abstain from sexual activity and understand all of the consequences involved in dating and sexual contact with others.

**For more information about teens and sexuality check out The Teens and Kids Open Directory website which contains more information about teens and sexuality from abstinence to contraception. You can find it at: [http://dmuz.org/kids\\_and\\_Teens/Teen\\_Life/Sexuality/](http://dmuz.org/kids_and_Teens/Teen_Life/Sexuality/). Also feel free to contact the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center to research and find more information for you regarding this topic area.**

### **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth:**

Talking with and supporting foster teens as they deal with issues surrounding sex can be complicated and uncomfortable. For teens that are dealing with same sex attractions or facing questions surrounding gender identity, the topic of sex becomes more complex and possibly emotionally charged. Foster parents not unlike the general public may have their own strong views regarding sexuality, especially homosexuality. Earlier in this chapter the importance of foster parents discussing their views and opinions with the licensing agency on how effectively they might parent one group of foster children over the other was covered. This would be most crucial when considering fostering teens as there is a good probability that foster parents who choose to work with teens may eventually have a teen placed in their home that has questions around their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Tips for working with LGBTQ youth:**

- ❖ Be aware of and sensitive to the safety concerns for LGBTQ youth such as: depression, anxiety, homelessness, victimization from verbal and physical harassment, and potentially higher suicide rates due to societal stigma and isolation.
- ❖ Lay ground rules for physical and emotional safety in the home despite opposing values - all foster youth deserve unconditional love and respect.
- ❖ Help the teen find a counselor or therapist who is trained and sensitive to LGBTQ issues. Participate in counseling with the teen when asked and collaborate with the counselor around recommendations for additional services.
- ❖ Advocate for the foster teen with the birth family, case workers and school personnel.
- ❖ Recognize that you do know LGBTQ individuals; whether they have come out to you or not.
- ❖ Educate yourself and others about LGBTQ youth; become an “ALLY”. Help LGBTQ youth find resources and support in your area, such as local youth groups that are LGBTQ friendly.
- ❖ Use gender neutral/inclusive language, such as “partner”, “significant other” and eliminate LGBTQ slurs from your daily conversations
- ❖ Support transgender young people in their gender expression. Refer to them by the names and pronouns they prefer. Support their choice of attire.
- ❖ Respect the youth’s desire for confidentiality; follow his/her lead in respect to being “out” or not.

**For more information about LGBTQ issues and support, visit the Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG) web site at <http://www.pflag.org/> or contact the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center.**

## **TRANSITIONS**

### **Preparing Foster Children for a Move to another Out-of-Home Placement:**

When a foster child is moving to a new placement it is important to limit the amount of trauma the child experiences. Regardless of the reason for the move, each move is a loss of relationships and connections for the child. The child and the foster family need time to say goodbye. The foster family may want to do something to honor the child's time with their family. The foster family could add something to the child's life book or have a special meal together with the child's favorite foods. What is most important is that the child knows that it is OK with the current foster family for him or her to move on to another family.

### **Children Returning Home:**

The goal of foster care is generally to reunify the child with his or her parents. To meet this goal, most children will have regular interactions with their families throughout their time in foster care. An experienced foster mother suggests that as the time approaches for the child to move back with his or her birth family, that the child should start to take some things home during visits and leave them there. This helps the child understand in a tangible way that he or she is going home.

### **Children Who Age Out of Foster Care:**

If the plan is for the child in your home to move out on his or her own after turning age 18 or graduating from high school, the foster parent should work on a transition plan with the child to help prepare the youth for his or her move.

#### **Here are some things to keep in mind if you are helping a foster child transition to young adulthood:**

- ❖ Work together to fill in any gaps in his or her life book. These will be important later if he or she starts a family.
- ❖ Work together to identify supports and people who will be there to help him or her as a young adult.
- ❖ Help gather last minute household and personal items needed in his or her apartment.
- ❖ Discuss whether your home can be a place to come back to.

### **Chapter 3: Key Points to Remember**

- ❖ It is important to understand why a child is in foster care before he or she is placed in your home so that you can provide the best care possible for the child and your family.
- ❖ It is okay to say “no”, you should not take a placement you do not feel comfortable with. Children in foster care need parents who are ready to care for their unique needs.
- ❖ Being predictable and consistent is one of the best ways to help a child who is having difficulty adjusting to placement
- ❖ You must be willing and able to provide HIGH LEVELS OF SUPERVISION for children who have been sexually abused.
- ❖ The needs of children in foster care are varied and complex, and there is no one “magic” way of managing their behavior.
- ❖ You must provide for daily care needs such as: education, health, religion, recreational, and special grooming assistance as culturally indicated.
- ❖ It is required that you child-proof your home according to the requirements in licensing standards to protect the safety of all children living there and educate foster children about safety in your home
- ❖ A life book can give a child in foster care a sense of identity.
- ❖ Look for or create teachable moments for your teen that will allow him or her opportunities to learn about being responsible and independent.
- ❖ HFS 56.09(1) (d) indicates that a foster parent cannot deny a foster child access to confidential family planning services.
- ❖ Be aware of and sensitive to the safety concerns for LGBTQ youth.
- ❖ Transitions are difficult for everyone, be especially sensitive to children in foster care as they transition and make plans to decrease the impact or trauma of the transition.